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## Public Health Concerns Trump Other Priorities In Plant City



10765250

A frightening situation in Plant City raises questions about the effectiveness of state pollution laws.

Public health officials are investigating whether pollution from the phosphate plant or nearby old landfills are causing health problems in two Plant City neighborhoods, which neighbors say suffer high rates of cancer.

The Tribune's Deborah Alberto found that exceedingly high concentrations of such carcinogens as arsenic, cadmium, chromium, lead and gross alpha radiation have been found on the Coronet Industries' property.

Large amounts of fluorides, which in high doses cause health problems, have been found in its groundwater.

The processing plant has a long history of pollution problems. And neighbors believe plant chemicals are responsible for widespread health problems, including many cancer deaths.

The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a branch of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has authorized the Florida Department of Health to study the effects of the plant and the nearby landfills on the neighborhoods to determine if there are an unusual number of illnesses and if environmental factors are to blame.

The study will likely be completed by March.

What makes the situation especially complicated and urgent is that Plant City's largest development (2,600 houses) is proposed for a tract near the plant. Developers are looking for the go-ahead.

Obviously, city officials should wait for the health study to be completed before making any land-use decisions.

Alberto found the development's lawyer sought to persuade federal health officials not to order the additional health assessment. That's very troubling. The public's health should always be the paramount concern in a situation like this.

What is also troubling is that despite extensive regulations, the plant became a hot spot of contamination. Remember, too, that state controls did little to keep the processing plant at Piney Point in Manatee County from becoming a toxic threat to Tampa Bay. Gov. Jeb Bush should order an immediate review to determine if state laws are adequate.

The Plant City case illustrates what is at stake: The health of citizens and the welfare of the

economy.

**This story can be found at:** <http://www.tampatrib.com/News/MGAQCPKZ4ID.html>

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